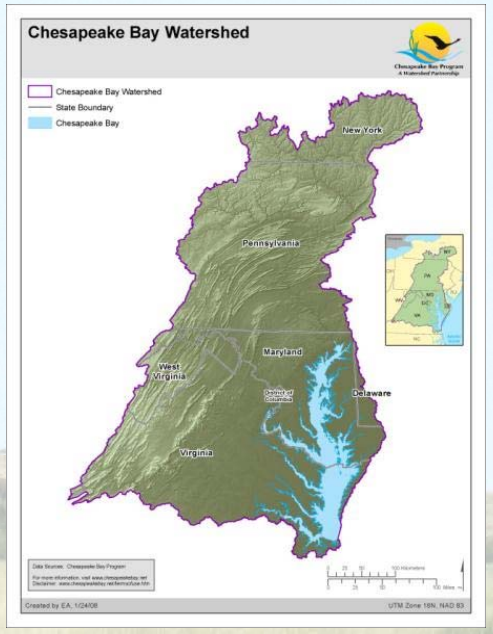
Chesapeake Bay Program
Large Aquatic Ecosystem (LAE)

The **Chesapeake Bay Program** is a unique regional partnership that has led and directed the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. The Chesapeake Bay was the nation's first estuary established by Congress and authorized in the Clean Water Act. The Chesapeake Bay Program partners include an array of Federal, State (Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Delaware, New York, and West Virginia), local governments, including the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission and an array of public and private entities. The program is also informed by three independent Advisory Committees (Local Government, Scientific and Technical, and Citizen). The Bay program is led by the Chesapeake Executive Council comprised of the Governors, Administrator of EPA, Mayor of DC and others.



The Bay Program partners have signed a multitude of agreements to reduce pollutants into the Bay and restore its living resources. Most recently, the landmark Chesapeake 2000 agreement described 102 explicit commitments by Bay Program partners that advance Bay and Watershed restoration.

The Bay Program annually publishes a health and restoration report that contains comprehensive ecosystem health and restoration measures of progress over the past 25 years. The Report tracks 13 ecosystem health indicators of water quality (e.g., dissolved oxygen, mid-channel water clarity), habitats (e.g., bay grasses) and fisheries (e.g., oysters, blue crab, American shad and striped bass) and twenty indicators of restoration progress (e.g., reduction of nutrients and sediments, fish passage restored, lands preserved).

In the past five years, there have been as many as 23-third party or scientific peer review assessments and reports on the Program by the Government Accountability Office, EPA's Inspector General, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Public Administration and others.

Challenges

Four centuries of population growth, resource depletion, increasing pollution levels and changes to the landscape mean that the restoration of the 64,000-square-mile Chesapeake Bay watershed ecosystem is an enormous undertaking. The land mass of the Bay watershed is 16 times the size of the Bay, a ratio higher that any other comparable watershed in the world, and home to nearly 17 million people.

The predominant focus of the collective efforts of the Bay Program partners is reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution from entering the Bay. The primary sources of this pollution are agriculture, wastewater treatment plants, developed and developing lands, and air deposition.

Priorities

- Continue to build on the world class science, monitoring, and knowledge of this complex ecosystem.
- Emphasize implementation activities by all partners that will improve water quality.
- Strengthen and expand partnerships in the watershed particularly with local governments and local watershed groups.
- Enhance coordination and integration of restoration activities and accountability through the "Chesapeake Action Plan".
- Embrace a new organization structure and adaptive management as a means to better learn and change.
- Identify new tools, programs, authorities and resources that will advance progress of protecting and restoring the Watershed and bay by all partners.

Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership

www.chesapeakebay.net

Accomplishments

The Bay Program has fostered unparalleled cooperation among stakeholders in the watershed, producing agreements that have multiple jurisdictions working across state lines on Bay restoration and preservation issues, including:

- Adopting nutrient and sediment allocations for all parts of the watershed.
- Detailing tributary-specific pollution reduction and habitat restoration plans.
- Coordinating an NPDES permitting approach for the 483 significant wastewater treatment facilities in the bay watershed.
- Planting nearly 6,000 miles of streamside forests, restoring more than12,500 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetland, and permanently preserving almost 7 million acres of parks, wildlife refuges and private lands.
- Removing blockages to over 2,000 miles of historic spawning grounds for shad and other migratory fish.

Despite these efforts, the overall state of the Chesapeake Bay remains severely degraded as program partners contend with the impacts of dramatic population growth and development and other major influences on water quality, habitats, fish and shellfish.

Future Direction

The Chesapeake Bay Program continues to build on its past success and to adapt, innovate and implement new strategies and approaches that will accelerate restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Watershed and Bay, including:

- Continue implementation of the Chesapeake Action Plan, a set of tools to improve coordination, management, and accountability of Partner efforts.
- Continue “champion” roles among the partners to promote innovative approaches that focus and accelerate implementation efforts with particular emphasis on reducing nutrients and sediments.
- Identify new approaches consistent with the Inspector General’s finding that the Bay Program lacks the tools, authorities, and programs needed to restore the Bay.
- Promote “No Runoff Development” by identifying progressive developers and builders that will keep virtually all runoff on a site through a full suite of practices that capture and reuse, infiltrate and evapotranspirate all runoff.
- Better engage local governments and watershed organizations.
- Target implementation of conservation practices on agriculture lands in the watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay Program Facts
Watershed Size: 64,000 square miles
Waterbody Size: Surface area of the Bay and tributaries is 125 billion sq. ft. (4,480 sq. miles)
Population: 16.6 million people and growing ~170,000 more people each year
EPA Region: 3
Director: Jeff Lape

*The **Chesapeake Bay Program** was designated a member of the US Environmental Protection Agency’s Large Aquatic Ecosystem Council (LAE) in 2008. The Chesapeake Bay Program joins nine other geographic-based efforts that focus on protecting and restoring the health of critical aquatic ecosystems. The LAE Council seeks to merge geographically-based efforts with national water programs to advance the health of the Nation’s large aquatic ecosystems and strengthen national water programs.*

LAE Program Websites

Chesapeake Bay Program
www.chesapeakebay.net

Columbia River Basin
www.epa.gov/region10/columbia

Great Lakes
www.epa.gov/glnpo

Gulf of Mexico Program
www.epa.gov/gmpo

Lake Champlain Basin Program
www.lcbp.org

Long Island Sound Study
www.longislandsoundstudy.net

Pacific Islands Office
www.epa.gov/region09/islands

Puget Sound - Georgia Basin
(Under Construction)

San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary
(Under Construction)

South Florida Geographic Initiative
www.epa.gov/Region4/water/southflorida

Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds

www.epa.gov/owow/oceans/partnerships/large_aquatic.html

October 2008